equipments in the country?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI MADHAV RAO SCINDIA): (a) and (b) Tourism related equipment is generally available in the country. However, to meet certain specialised needs, import of equipment is allowed in accordance with policy in this regard.

Regional Steel Consumer Councils

3197. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the number and places whether Regional Steel Consumer Councils have been set up and have started functioning;

(b) whether there is any proposal to set up more such councils in every State capital; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) No Regional Steel Consumer Councils have been set up by the Government of India.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

[*Translation*]

Post and Telegraph Offices in Rural Area

3198. SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of post and telegraph offices to be opened in rural areas of the country during the Eighth Five Year Plan; and

(b) the criteria laid down for opening new post and telegraph office in rural areas?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) Expansion of postal network in the rural areas of the country is envisaged during the Eighth Five Year plan. It is, however, not feasible to give details in this regard as the Eighth Plan has not been finalised.

As regards the telegraph office, the plan proposal envisages provision of telegraph facility at about 21200 places in rural areas of the country depending upon the feasibility during the Eighth Five Year Plan.

(b) Th criteria laid down by the Department for opening of new post offices in rural areas are given in attached statement.

Presently, telegraph facility in rural areas is provided on phonocom basis using long distance public telephones depending upon the demand and feasibility.

STATEMENT

Criteria/Norms fixed for opening new post offices in rural areas. (effective from 1-4-91)

The followed normal for opening branch post offices effective from 1-4-1991 have been adopted.

(i) *Population:*–

(a) *In rural areas:* 3000 population in a group of villages (including the PPO villages)

(b) *In the hilly, tribal desert and Inaccessible area:* 500 population in